

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO*

EXCERPTS FROM OUR STATE MEDICAL JOURNAL

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From some editorial notes:

Apropos of Plague.—In Los Angeles, in San Jose, in Stockton, in Sacramento, as well as in San Francisco, there have been meetings of the local medical societies where the subject of plague was discussed. That is eminently well. There is just one way, and one only, of determining whether or not plague exists in any place; and that is by a careful inspection of all dead persons over a period of months. . . . And this inspection must be made by one who knows. We know that plague, in the early years of an epidemic, is a very insignificant thing, so far as the number of cases is concerned. We also know that it is not difficult to eradicate, in these early years, if we know that it exists. How long did it exist in San Francisco before it was recognized? Nobody knows, for its discovery was almost, if not quite, accidental and it was some time before any systematic examination of the dead was enforced. We all know the history of that former epidemic; the shameful history of denial and concealment and the near approach to "shotgun quarantine. . . ."

Shall We Do It?—Two things alone are certain; where there are plague-infected rats or squirrels there will occur occasional cases of plague in man; and where there are cases originating of plague in man there we will find plague-infected rats or squirrels.

Enforce the Law.—Once again the journal feels called upon to emphasize the fact that all laws regulating the practice of medicine are police measures intended for the protection of the public against predatory greed and ignorance. . . .

From an article on "Plague" by William Simpson, M. D., San Jose.

That in the fleas of rats and mice we may find the bacillus of plague, was announced in 1897, giving plague to mice by inoculating them with infected fleas. That this bacillus may be inoculated into rats and mice by the bites of fleas is very possible, and it is proved that the fleas of rats and mice transmit the disease to man.

From an article on "The Evolution of the Disease Entity Called Manic-Depressive Insanity, and Its Main Features" by A. W. Hoisholt, M. D., Stockton.

The term "mania," which was in use at the time of Hippocrates, was derived, according to Esquirol, from a word signifying moon, from which the Greeks coined the word "maniac," moon-struck and the Latin's lunatic, words which are still in common use today.

From an article on "Medical Testimony" by Dr. S. B. Lyon, San Jose.

The author calls attention to the present unfortunate and rather humiliating condition into which medical expert testimony has fallen, and points out the manner in which the average physician when placed on the witness stand is made to appear as a mere plaything of the attorneys in the case. He does not believe that this is due to the fact that the average physician knows less medicine than the best lawyer, but he believes that it is due to the fact that the average lawyer prepares himself most carefully and, on the particular points at issue, is in court a better phy-

sician than is the best physician a lawyer. In other words, the physician seldom tries to know well the relation of his profession to the law. . . .

From County Society Reports:

Los Angeles County.—At the meeting of the Los Angeles County Association held October 11, the general subject of discussion was plague. Dr. C. B. Nichols delivered the principal address, and reviewed the etiology, pathology, symptoms, modes of transmission, and prophylaxis. The discussion was further continued by Dr. N. K. Foster, secretary of the State Board of Health, who dilated upon what was being done in San Francisco and elsewhere to limit the spread and eventually eradicate the disease. . . .

From a report on California Pure Food Commission by George H. Kress, Secretary, Los Angeles.

The organization of the Pure Food Committees throughout the state has been making splendid progress. . . .

Last, but not least, we are able to chronicle the successful outcome of our battle with the Los Angeles Gas and Electric Company, which corporation and the railroads the Commission has been fighting for the last six months in an effort to do away with the smoke nuisance of Los Angeles. This nuisance has become a grievous evil in the south, and the successful outcome of the battle with the gas and railroad companies is a decidedly pleasant condition of affairs, for these companies have dominated the City Council for years.

In spite of the many delays the final vote was taken on the ordinance, every councilman voting for the ordinance. Why? Because the agitation had centered the attention of the public on the ordinance, and as the public were in favor of the ordinance the councilmen did not dare to vote against it.

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Plankton Nuisance.—In the spring, for the past three or four years, complaints have been received of odor nuisances in the coves along the Marin County shore of San Francisco Bay. An investigation made last year shows that it was due to the presence of a microscopic alga. Its return has been watched for this spring, and about the middle of May the growth began to appear, until at the present time it is so thick that it rolls up as a thick sludge in nearly all of the coves. There are thousands of tons of this growth. As it begins to die it gives off hydrogen sulphid and heavy odors of protein decomposition. For the growth of this alga, the requirements are much silica and slight sewage pollution, sunshine and warm weather. It is possible that it may be growing widely in the San Francisco Bay and only because winds blow it to the Marin shores does it become troublesome there. It constitutes an odor nuisance only.

Organized Recreation Involves Responsibility.—The maintenance of summer camps and recreation places for both children and adults involves considerable responsibility from a public health point of view. It is understood that adequate sanitary equipment must be provided in all such places, that complete provision be made for the proper disposal of all waste, including garbage, and that a supply of pure drinking water be available at all times. The responsibility of the management of such places does not end with the provision of these facilities alone. It is unsafe to employ any individuals in the handling and distribution of foods unless such individuals have been able to pass a rigid physical examination. Furthermore, particular attention should be paid to the proper storage of foodstuffs. . . .

* This column strives to mirror the work and aims of colleagues who bore the brunt of state society work some twenty-five years ago. It is hoped that such presentation will be of interest to both old and recent members.

Oakland Health Department Holds Open House.—Early in August the city government of Oakland held an open house in order that the residents of that city might have an opportunity to learn how municipal governmental functions are carried on. A total of twenty-five thousand persons came to the City Hall on that day and eight thousand of them visited the health department, where they learned in detail how the public health is safeguarded through communicable disease control, milk and food inspection, and all the various attributes of the modern municipal health department.

There is considerable merit in this idea, and many other cities might well follow the Oakland plan in order that their residents may have better opportunities to learn the type of activities that are maintained for the purpose of safeguarding the public health.

Highway Eating Places Inspected.—The following inspections were made of highway eating places and service stations along highways of California:

Santa Cruz County. Inspected, 31—Satisfactory, 11; minor defects, 14; insanitary conditions, 3.

Reinspected, 32—Improvements made, 27; insanitary conditions, 5.

Gas service stations inspected, 7—Satisfactory conditions, 5; insanitary conditions, 2.

Auburn Road, Alta to Roseville. Inspected, 40—Satisfactory, 10; minor defects, 16; insanitary conditions, 13.

Reinspected 3, where improvements had been made. Gas service stations inspected, 9—Conditions satisfactory, 5; minor defects, 4.

Redding-Alturas Road. Inspected, 29—Satisfactory conditions, 5; minor defects, 9; insanitary conditions, 15.

Bishop and June Lake Highway. Inspected, 7—Satisfactory conditions, 4; minor defects, 2; insanitary conditions, 1.

The total number of food supply houses along highways inspected and reinspected during August was 139. In nearly all cases where unsatisfactory conditions had previously been found, improvements had been made before reinspection.

Oiling Mosquito-Breeding Marshes by Airplane.—(A report on an experimental demonstration conducted by the Alameda County Mosquito Abatement District.) A demonstration of oiling by airplane was made on Thursday, June 23, 1932, on the Plummer marsh, south of Newark. The plane was a specially equipped biplane furnished by Independent Crop Dusting, Inc., which they had developed for the application of liquid sprays for crop pests. . . .

With these mechanical difficulties removed, the method of airplane application of oil for destruction of mosquito larvae and pupae appears to have usefulness under the following conditions:

1. In oiling areas in early spring, when the dirt roads on and leading to the marshes are so soft that transportation of oil is impossible or very difficult.

2. In oiling large areas at other times of the year which have become flooded at extreme high tides, and where time is not available to cover such large areas on foot.

Under these conditions, airplane oiling can be made to compare with hand oiling in both cost and effectiveness.

The limitations of the method are as follows,

1. It is not economical or effective where there are small, isolated breeding places in a marsh, with large areas of nonbreeding ground between.

2. Under the weather conditions which usually prevail on the bay marshes, only a few hours in the early morning can be utilized for flying.

BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

By CHARLES B. PINKHAM, M. D.
Secretary-Treasurer

News Items

Reports relate that on June 6, 1932, Charles M. Stewart, M. D., pleaded guilty in the United States District Court of Los Angeles on a charge of violation of the Harrison Narcotic Act, and on May 26 was sent to the psychopathic ward of the Los Angeles General Hospital, where he was declared sane.

"Accused of employing his nine-year-old son to transport narcotics for him, Dr. Simon Zachariah, fifty-five, for thirty years a physician here, was arrested yesterday by state narcotic agents. . . . At the same time the agents arrested John C. Hildreth, fifty-three, a druggist of 2998 Mission Street, and charged him with conspiring with the physician to violate the State Poison Law . . ." (San Francisco *Examiner*, May 5, 1932).

"Dr. Charles M. Stewart of 609 South Grand Avenue, today was facing trial on a federal grand jury indictment returned yesterday, charging him with violation of the Harrison Narcotic Act. Chris Hansen, chief of the local narcotic bureau, who arrested Doctor Stewart several weeks ago, asserted he seized a small quantity of 'dope,' a pistol and several hundred pounds of ammunition. Hansen claimed the doctor distributed narcotics to addicts . . ." (Los Angeles *Herald and Express*, May 12, 1932).

Investigation reports relate that Anna Hofer in the Justice Court of Dinuba, Tulare County, on July 15, 1932, pleaded guilty on a charge of violation of the Medical Practice Act and was given a ninety-day suspended jail sentence on condition of no further violation of the Medical Practice Act.

"Robert Cavenagh, member of a 'confidence gang,' which swindled Charles Zeh of Antelope out of \$9,989 by the sale of a 'radium belt,' pleaded guilty yesterday after a jury had been selected to try him before Judge Martin I. Welsh and threw himself upon the mercy of the court. Judge Welsh will receive the probation report on August 16. The change of plea came before the state could begin the introduction of evidence. Attorney T. A. Farrell, in asking probation for Cavenagh, told the court that Cavenagh only acted as chauffeur for two other members of the 'confidence ring' and that more than \$5,000 of the money was paid before Cavenagh was engaged. The 'radium belt' was to cure the eyesight of Johanna Zeh, Zeh's sister. The other members of the ring are still at large." (Previous entry, *Eyesight Swindlers, CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE*, February and May, 1926; May, 1927; April and May, 1929; January, March, April, May, October, and December, 1931; January, April, May, and June, 1932.)

"Robert Cavenagh must serve two years in the county jail for the part he played in swindling Charles Zeh, Antelope rancher, out of \$9,989, which Zeh paid for 'treatment' of the eyes of his sister, Mrs. Johanna Zeh. Superior Judge Martin I. Welsh placed Cavenagh on probation today for five years, staying a sentence in San Quentin Prison, but imposing the jail sentence. Cavenagh also promised the court that he would testify for the state if his companions in the swindle were captured. Eddie Connors and Matthew Wilkinson are being sought by the police. Cavenagh, Connors, and Wilkinson are alleged to have been members of the ring which is alleged to have made a practice of swindling aged persons by giving 'medical treatments'" (Sacramento *Bee*, September 15, 1932). Cavenagh is said to be one of the "gang" of eyesight